

Fisheries Service Weekly Report

September 6, 2012

DIVISION UPDATES

Estuarine & Marine Fisheries Division

Commercial Striped Bass Tag Reduction / Alternative Management Update - Met with the Alternative Management Subcommittee of the Striped Bass Workgroup last week to get feedback regarding our assessment of the pros and cons of the management alternatives recommended for consideration. Staff continues to prepare for Open House events scheduled for later in September.

Coastal Fisheries Program: Mid Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (MAFMC) is taking their Draft of Amendment 3 to the Spiny Dogfish Fisheries Management Plan to the public this month. We did not request a public hearing in time for the rule-making schedule; however we will be hosting MAFMC staff at a meeting to review the document with our spiny dogfish stakeholders on September 10th. More information about the meeting is on our calendar here: <http://www.dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/calendar/v2/event.asp?id=425&date=9%2F10%2F2012>

Met with Tidewater Ecosystem Assessment, Wildlife, and Maryland Coastal Bays program to discuss the approach to the revision of the Comprehensive, Conservation and Management Plan for the Maryland Coastal Bays. Will continue to work with Fisheries staff to draft language, solicit input from Coastal Fisheries Advisory Commission, and submit to Maryland Coastal Bays Program (MCBP) by early December. MCBP staff will likely host an open house. Fisheries Service can provide guidance and support.

Environmental Review – Attended a site visit with Maryland Park Service to Conowingo Dam for the possible transfer of Exelon property to Maryland. In addition, a list of upgrades to Exelon's property were also assembled and included upgrades to trails, improving parking lots and access, constructing a kayak take-out area near Deer Creek, and building a boat ramp..

Re-evaluating the American shad model for Conowingo Dam that demonstrated that the goal of 2 million above York Haven Dam can be reached with successful young-of-the-year and adult downstream passage. This will include reinitiating upstream truck and transport and possibly a hatchery facility near Conowingo Dam.

Met with National Park Service to discuss Exelon's property transfer between NGOs, PA, MD and the counties. The complexities of the transfer will likely take several years and may be outside the settlement negotiations which should be completed by fall 2013. Issues raised with the transfer included tax credits for Exelon, loss of state and local taxes and possible upgrades prior to property transmittal.

Completed reviews of nine projects including several bridge reconstruction projects. Comments for these projects included in-stream time-of-year restrictions for rare, threatened or endangered species and maintaining hydrological conditions.

Aquaculture Division

Leasing/Permitting -

Lease Site Totals		Acreage Totals
143	Submitted since 9/7/10 (SLL+WC)	3253.844
32	Executed since 9/7/10 (SLL only)	1181.75
15	Executed since 9/7/10 (WC only)	67.76
47	All executed since 9/7/10	1249.51
5	Pending Execution (SLL+WC)	144.1
33	Terminated/Withdrawn	1268
67	Still in process since 9/7/10 (SLL+WC)	787
5	Incomplete	64.3
81	All applications submitted since 8/1/11	703.5623
50	Water Column submitted since 8/1/11	324.7458
9	Water Column executed since 8/1/11	29.78
8	In-water nursery (upweller) apps since 8/1/11	0.5395
24	Sanctuary submitted since 8/1/11	158.0037
2	Sanctuary executed since 8/1/11	30.7
34	Permitted by ACOE since 9/7/11	846.33

Highlights:

- Two new lease applications have been received in the last two weeks.
- Three new proposed lease public notices were submitted for publication beginning 9/6/12, 9/13/12 and 9/14/12.
- Two lease renewals were mailed to the leaseholder for signature. Four additional renewals are in preparation to be mailed.
- Seven lease transfers have been executed since 9/22. All but one of these was to add additional leaseholder names to an existing lease. Five additional lease transfers are pending for the same reason.
- Staff participated in site visits to two water column lease growers in St. Mary's County 8/28.

Field Operations/Marylanders Grow Oysters (MGO) - Spoke to a community group in Mill Creek (tributary of Whitehall Bay) regarding the MGO Program. There were over 15 people in attendance and about 12 were interested in joining. The number of growers among the creeks of Whitehall Bay has increased each year.

Attended a planning meeting for the City Dock Oyster Project (Annapolis) which will launch an effort in October using MGO cages and oysters as part of an environmental educational program

for local schools. MGO typically occurs at private piers; however a few of our MGO tributaries have opted to involve local schools. This Annapolis initiative is the largest scale educational outgrowth of MGO to date, with over 1,000 6th graders expected to participate by the end of the 2013 school year. The project is being conducted for Anne Arundel County Public Schools by various local partners including Chesapeake BaySavers, Annapolis Maritime Museum and Arlington Echo. DNR is providing 70 MGO cages with oysters, which will be held at City Dock on the “ego alley” finger piers. Sixth graders from four Anne Arundel County middle schools will come to City Dock for half day field trips and will monitor oyster growth and survival, as well as water quality; supervised by parents and teachers. The other half of the day will be spent at the Maritime Museum learning about oyster ecology and oyster industry culture & history. At the end of the project in 2013, the oysters will be planted in a sanctuary.

Conducted a site visit to the Marsh proposed lease sites in Chincoteague Bay to replace missing corner markers. The corners of these sites were temporarily marked with buoys by DNR Hydrographic Operations staff in mid July to provide the public with a more distinct visual perspective on the size and location of the lease areas. Twelve buoys were originally placed on the corners of three sites and six had to be replaced. Recognizing that the deadline for members of the public to file a petition of protest over the issuance of these leases is September 17th, it is important the markers remain in place until that time.

Inland Fisheries Division

Big Elk Creek - Assisted with a Maryland Biological Stream survey conducted in the lower portion of Big Elk Creek. The site was chosen due to upcoming MDE/TMDL future permitting needs. The survey showed high numbers of swallowtail shiners, satinfish shiners, redbreast sunfish, and juvenile smallmouth bass. Both species are quite popular with anglers who fish the stream. Many of the smallmouth bass were young-of-year. Big Elk Creek is also a major water source for the Town of Elkton.

Habitat and Water Quality - Reviewed and commented on the 2014 Pocomoke Forest Annual Work Plan for impacts to aquatic resources. Few comments were needed since activities already adhere to best management practices. Reviews of several stocking applications and scientific collection permits were also completed.

Fish Health - Mercury Study - Provided 25 young-of-year largemouth bass from Tuckahoe Lake for an annual statewide mercury deposition/contamination study.

Outreach – Set up and manned the display at the Maryland State Fair. The display highlighted freshwater fishes of Maryland and the work performed by DNR Fisheries staff. As usual, the Northern snakehead stole the show and garnered much interest from the crowd. Additionally, many visitors subscribed to Fisheries’ e-mail list to receive updates, news and information on fisheries topics. (<http://www.dnr.state.md.us/fisheries/emailcontact.asp>)

Hatcheries Division

Coldwater hatcheries – Albert Powell Hatchery continued work on their hatch room renovation. Changes should increase survival and growth of early life-stage trout. The de-gassing

tower construction and installation is complete and work now moves to the interior construction, plumbing and tank installation.



Piney Point Aquaculture Center – Shell bag construction continued in order to support the developing aquaculture industry in Maryland. Staff repaired 232 used pallets, which were reclaimed for future use. One-thousand shell bags were provided to a leaseholder for remote setting operations. Work crews from the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) cleaned and repaired 104 cages from the Marylanders Grow Oysters (MGO) program for reuse this fall.

Warm water hatcheries – Tagged largemouth bass juveniles with passive integrated transponder (PIT) tags. These tags have an unlimited lifespan and can be used to identify individual fish upon recapture after scanning with a hand-held detector. Staff tagged 240 nice largemouth bass that were raised to 5-9” in Manning Hatchery ponds.



Staff repaired the pier at Smithville Lake. This structure is due for complete replacement sometime in the near future.

Cooperative Management Investigations and Fish Health

Shellfish Health - AFS Meeting - A presentation, *Comparison of Two Methods for in Situ Hybridization Using Paraffin Sections*, stimulated strong interest among university and government fish health investigators attending the annual American Fisheries Society Fish Health Section meeting in LaCrosse, Wisconsin.

Softshell clam - Diagnostic and histological services were provided for a DNR Shellfish Division investigation of reported major recent mortality events among Patuxent River stout tagelus razor clams, *Tagelus plebeius*. Samples from Patuxent River sites at Broome's Island (82% recent mortality estimated) and Sandgates (40% recent mortality estimated) were analyzed for all diseases, of which the most prevalent was disseminated neoplasia that occurred among 43-47% of clams in those samples at consistently low intensities. *Perkinsus chesapeaki* infections among 50-53% of clams in those samples were also at consistently low intensities. The summary conclusion is that pathological analyses revealed no explanatory cause for the high reported recent razor clam mortalities.

Finfish Health - Sturgeon - Cytological services were provided for 79 Atlantic surgeon blood smears that were prepared and air-dried onto microscope slides at the fish hatchery of the UMCES-Horn Point Aquaculture Research Laboratory.

Hatchery support - Sample collection services were provided to the Hatcheries Division, in support of its annual survey of trout from the Albert Powell Hatchery, pending disease certification of that trout production facility by contractors from the USFWS Lamar, PA Fish Health Laboratory. Tissues from more than 300 rainbow trout were collected for use in USFWS assays for detection of selected bacterial, parasitic, and viral pathogens.

Marine Mammal and Sea Turtles - A single bottlenose dolphin was recovered dead from the Assateague beach on 9/1/12.

Fisheries Marketing Division

Chef Education Trip – Took a group of chefs and bloggers to tour the JM Clayton Crabmeat Company and the Choptank Sweet Oyster Farm. Chefs were educated about the various crab harvest methods, processing methods, and oyster aquaculture. Through last week we have worked on training over 150 foodservice professionals

Wholesalers – Met with wholesalers in the Jessup Seafood Market to update them on the promotions we have initiated over the summer. With the wholesalers on board we can help to spread the word of the various promotions and theoretically get more businesses to join in.

Communications and Outreach Division

Customer Service – Information requests covered a wide range of topics this week. There were four fish identification requests in regard to juvenile red drum, black drum, harvest fish and striped killifish. Fishing regulation questions involved fishing on Jennings Randolph Reservoir, fly fishing on the Patuxent and sharks. Questions regarding location of boat ramps on the upper Potomac, fishing opportunities at Point Lookout and places to fish for flounder were also answered. Two public notices were sent the newspapers; one for Application for Shellfish

Aquaculture Lease was published in the Worcester County Times for two weeks and the other was published in The Baltimore Sun announcing the 2012 Commercial Horseshoe Crab Season.

Maryland Fishing Challenge - Eleven individuals were entered into the Maryland Fishing Challenge. Mailings were sent issuing the invitation letter for the Grand Finale Celebration of the MD Fishing Challenge on September 8, 2012 at Sandy Point State Park.

Fishing Report: Last week's fishing report focused on the good fishing for a mix of striped bass, bluefish and Spanish mackerel in the middle and lower bay regions as well as white perch and spot fishing. Freshwater anglers in the western region are enjoying good fishing for smallmouth bass and largemouth bass fishing is good throughout the state. Coastal fishermen are finding good flounder fishing, a summer mix of surf species and fair fishing offshore for pelagic species.